

A decorative geometric pattern in gold and teal, featuring intricate star and polygonal shapes, some filled with intricate floral or arabesque designs. The pattern is layered and creates a sense of depth and complexity.

Insan

(HUMAN)
DESCRIBED IN THE QURAN

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Insaan described in Quran

The Quran has used the word Insaan to describe a human being. The word “Insaan” appears about 43 times in its singular form in the Quran. Let us look at the meaning of this word “Insaan”. It has come from the word which the Quran uses as well i.e Ins (which means to be familiar with or to feel compassion for something). Quran has used the words Insaan and “Bashar” as alternatives.15:26 and 15:28. Besides this, the word “Inseyan” has also appeared along with Bashar in the Quran 19:26.

An Naas is the plural of “ins” or Insaan. Some also think that it is a collective noun like “Qaum” which means a tribe or community. Some others believe that “An-anas” was “Onaas” to start with, which is the plural of ins. Anas means to see and feel whilst in-naas means to comprehend and believe something, all these are roots of the word Insaan and may mean all of these qualities.

One more view is that Nisyan is of a similar root which means to forget so this is another quality of Insaan. He forgets and needs reminding regularly-the Quran being called the reminder (Ad-Dhikr).

The other word used for humans in the Quran is “Bashar” it comes from the root word “bashara” which means the upper surface of a man’s skin. As such “al-bashar” means to strip the skin, i.e. to clear it of hair. “Al-basher” came to mean man himself with the difference that “Bashar” means only the physical part of a human being. This way, every human child or human being is a Bashar, but the ingredients (elements) of humanness would be different in each human being.

Thus the Quran says about the Messenger pbuh:
18:110 “(Tell them) I too am a (Bashar) human like you all”

The word “baasharah” i.e. copulation in such a way that the skin of man and woman is in contact (2:187). the Quran uses “basheru hunna” in 2:187 for sexual relations. Another root of Bashar i.e. “bishara” basically means tidings/news which change the colour of a man’s face, regardless of the news being unpleasant or pleasant. “basharra” i.e. to impart such news Although usually bisharah is used for good news.

Thus to summarise the above discussion the word 'Bashar' comes from 'Basharah' which means skin. Since human beings unlike most animals are not covered by hair and their skin is generally visible therefore the word 'Bashar' is used to refer to them. Similarly, 'Insan' and 'Ins' are literally from the same root as the word 'Uns', that means to become familiar, social and to feel; opposite to being savage and indifferent.

In line with the above literal meaning of the two words and according to their common usage in Arabic, where the Qur'an refers to human beings as 'Bashar', the mere appearance and physical aspects of human beings are the focal point. For example look at 3:47 (Maryam says no 'Bashar' has touched her) and 12:31 (women being amazed by the beauty of Yusuf saying that he is not 'Bashar').

Again based on the above meaning and common usage of the word 'Insaan', where the Qur'an uses this word to refer to human beings, the personality, qualities and non-physical features of human beings are intended. For example look at 10:12 (referring to the neglecting feature of 'Insaan') and 103:2 (referring to the fact that 'Insaan' is in principle in loss).

After this brief description of the word Insaan and Bashar used for a human being in the Quran let us look at the verses of the Quran that mention different qualities of this Insaan!

I will follow the Quranic sequence of the surahs in describing the verses that mention Insaan and its qualities.

Following are the 43 places in the Quran where a mention of Insaan has been made:

(4:28) “God wants to lighten your burdens, for Insaan was created weak”

This verse talks about the weakness of man inherent in his make up or nature. However, this verse- as is the

method of the Quran- provides a solution to this intrinsic problem. The solution lies in the way of life presented by our creator. God has made special provision for all humans to lessen the burden on them by making the Quranic principles and commands easy to comprehend and follow. God has taken away the difficulty that people from various religions have imposed upon themselves in the name of God and religion. God says:

“He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty” (22:78)

“And God wants to lighten for you [your difficulties]”... (4:28)

God has made each individual responsible without him having to go through any religious authority and each individual is held accountable to the limit of his or her capability, God says:

“God does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity...” (2:286)

“So keep your duty to God as much as you can.....” (64:16)

As a means of reassurance to humans about God being all aware of their weaknesses; in the same sentence of the above verse God says:

“But if you avoid the major sins which you have been forbidden, We shall remit your (trivial) offences, and cause you to enter an honourable abode” (4:31)

(10:12) “And (such is Insaan that) when an affliction befalls him, he cries out to Us, reclining and sitting and standing. But no sooner than We have removed his affliction, he passes on as though he had never cried out to Us to remove his affliction. Thus it is that the misdeeds of the transgressors are made fair-seeming to them”

Man shows total reliance on Almighty God, the Omnipotent only when he is in trouble and difficulty. When men's difficulties disappear their reliance also diminishes. They think they have become self-sufficient. This fact is expressed in the above verse.

Man has a natural disposition and a spiritual longing for truth as a “thirst” (ta’at̤ash) that must be quenched. It is a void and emptiness in the heart, an uneasiness with existence, which must be filled by discovering meaning and purpose to life. And while reason is an important tool to achieving faith in God, it is still merely one step along the spiritual path: “Beyond the level of reason lies another level that opens another eye by which one gains insight into the Unseen and into what will occur in the future, among other things.

Our experiences with extreme difficulties in our daily lives provide us this amazing insight into the fact that we, regardless of our way of life turn toward God and prayers of some sort in such times! This is not just a distress call as there is nothing physical in front of us at

such times, distress calls are made to tangible resources for help-this behaviour is much more than that and is innate in our nature.

Knowledge of God resides primarily in the heart and is reinforced by reason, but it is not achieved and consolidated by reason alone. Such experiences of hardship and our helplessness as a creation reinforce the power and magnanimity of our creator. However, once that experience is over so is our sincere, intense and close attachment with the most powerful of all forces! It is this very attitude and behaviour that is alluded to in this verse and other verses of the Quran like 30:33-34; and 39:8.

(11:9&10) “If We ever favour Insaan with Our Mercy, and then take it away from him, he becomes utterly desperate, totally ungrateful. And if We let him taste favour after harm has touched him, he says: 'All my ills are gone', and he suddenly becomes exultant and boastful, Except those who show patience and do righteous good deeds: for them will be forgiveness and a great reward”

This verse highlights a very sad element of the human nature. This further explains the innate weaknesses of human nature. It is this: Man is, by nature, shallow and superficial and lacks the depth of thought. When he enjoys prosperity and power he becomes joyous, arrogant and boastful; to the extent that he becomes

deluded and cannot even comprehend any possibility of his smooth and happy situation ever coming to an end.

On the other hand when times are tough and he suffers any losses, he becomes an embodiment of despair and begins to complain of his misfortune here, there, and everywhere. Sometimes he does not hesitate even to abuse God and taunt at His Mercy and power. But whenever there is a change for the better in his fortune, he again begins to brag of his foresight, wisdom and success.

All the blessings which are handed down to man after hardships and sufferings must serve as a source of thanksgiving and remembering God and not as a means of arrogance, boasting and self-satisfaction.

There are two risks to one's joy, one is making a wrong analysis of events, and the other is that this joy would result in a person's arrogance.

Worldly affairs do not always take the same path, on the contrary, they have two sides to them; sometimes they run in your favour, at other times, they run against you.

Once they are in your favour, you must not become arrogant, and once they are otherwise, you must keep your patience as being content with our situations- good or bad- and trying to change them for better to the best of our abilities is what signifies a dignified life!

The solutions to this fault of mankind lies in patience and performance of good deeds!

(14:34) “And Who gave you all that you asked Him for. Were you to count the favours of God you shall never be able to encompass them. Verily Insaan is highly unjust, exceedingly ungrateful”

The expression “He gave you all that you asked for” means that God has provided for everything that is required for your life, its development and evolution. He has installed and instilled all the qualities, skills, abilities and capacities that are required for your progress and development. He has endowed all mankind with physical and spiritual abilities to explore them and take this beautiful journey towards their creator, if they so choose!

He has made all the provisions for the life that humans would otherwise have been incapable of even envisaging let own providing or inventing. The preceding verses explain this great and amazing system of provision for man by his creator:

“It is God Who created the heavens and the earth, Who sent down water from the heaven and thereby brought forth a variety of fruits as your sustenance, Who subjected for you the ships that they may sail in the sea by His command, Who subjected for you the rivers, Who subjected for you the sun and the moon and both of them are constant on their courses, Who subjected for you the night and the day” (14:32-33)

This verse describes the unmeasurable and fabulous bounties that God has bestowed upon mankind and yet

they are repaying with ingratitude and disobedience and with whom they are setting up equals even though He has been so bountiful to them. This lack of gratitude and being unjust has been highlighted as negative qualities of man in this verse.

(15:26-29) “Surely We brought Insaan into being out of dry ringing clay which was moulded from black mud, while We had brought the jinn into being before out of scorching fire. Recall when your Lord said to the angels: "I will indeed bring into being a human being out of dry ringing clay moulded from black mud. When I have completed shaping him and have breathed into him of My Spirit, then fall you down before him in prostration”

This verse describes the humble origins of the human being or Insaan. This verse also makes it clear that it was the breathing of the soul into this lifeless mould of clay that gave Insaan its real worth and it is this very soul or divine characteristics that should be looked after by the Insaan. The Arabic word salsal means the dried clay which produces a sound like pottery. Hams is the black mud which has become so rotten as to be in a fermented state. Masnun has a double meaning:

- (a) The rotten clay which has become greasy, (b) clay which has been moulded into a shape.

It is clear from the wording of the text that at first the image of man was made of clay from rotten earth and when it dried up, soul was breathed into it.

“And have breathed into him of My Spirit” means when I have cast a reflection of My divine characteristics on him. This shows that the soul of man implies life, knowledge, power, will, discretion and other human characteristics in the aggregate. These are in reality a slight reflection of divine characteristics that has been cast on the human body, which was originally created from dried clay. And it is this divine reflection on the human body which has raised him to the position of the Khalifa or a governor of God and made him that worthy being before whom angels and every earthly thing should bow down.

As a matter of fact, the source of each characteristic of everything is one divine characteristic or the other, as is borne by a tradition:

God divided mercy into one hundred parts: then He reserved ninety-nine parts for Himself and sent down the remaining one part to the earth. It is because of that one part that the creatures show mercy to one another. So much so that it is due to this that an animal refrains from placing the hoof on its young ones.

In this connection one has to be on strict guard against the notion that the possession of a part of any divine

characteristic amounts to the possession of a part of Godhead. This is because Godhead is absolutely beyond the reach of each and every creation.

(16:4) “He has created Insaan from a sperm drop; and behold this same (Insaan) becomes an open disputer!”

This verse describes the humble method that our creator has put in place for the continuity of human race on this planet. Despite his humble origin, from clay, and his humble beginnings on the planet this very man is capable of finding hair splitting arguments in favour of his views-regardless of the fact if his views are right or wrong! It is this very quality that has been highlighted in this verse.

This verse has two meanings and both are meant here.

(1) Though God created man from an insignificant spermdrop, he is capable of arguing and giving reasons in support of his claims-right or wrong.

(2) Man who has such an insignificant origin, has become so vain that he does not hesitate to dispute even with his Creator.

When considered in its first sense, it signifies the importance of man in all the creations of God, how it is man that is able to construct and dismantle civilizations

based on his ideas and ideals. No other creation is able to do this on this planet.

When taken in the second sense, it is meant to warn man that he should not forget the insignificant origin of his existence whilst engaging in his rebellious arguments against his Creator. If he remembered the different stages of his humble birth and growth, he would consider many times before he assumed a haughty and rebellious attitude towards his Creator.

(17:11) “And Insaan [often] prays for things that are bad as if he were praying for something that is good: for man is prone to be hasty [in his judgments]”

This is another aspect of a human psyche. Being hasty and jumping to conclusions without due respect to all aspects of the issue or a situation. Man is prone to looking at the immediate and the quick gain and in pursuit of this immediate he tends to forget the long-term as well as ignores the deeper meaning and wider consequences of his desires and wishes.

This verse is an answer to the foolish demands of the disbelievers of Makkah who repeatedly demanded from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to bring about that torment and punishment which he was warning them about. It is closely connected with the preceding verse, as if to say: O foolish people instead of asking goodness you demand the torment. Can't you realize the sufferings

of the community which was visited by God's torment in the past?

This verse also contains a subtle warning to those Muslims who prayed for punishment for those disbelievers who persecuted them and rejected the message out rightly; there were still among those disbelievers many such people who afterwards embraced Islam and became its standard bearers in the world. That is why God says:

Man does so because he is very hasty and impatient. He prays to God for all such things as are the immediate need of the time, though often subsequent experience shows that if God had granted his prayer, it would have been very harmful to him.

As the verse of Quran embodies it {2: 216}- *"it may well be that you hate a thing the while it is good for you, and it may well be that you love a thing the while it is bad for you: and God knows, whereas you do not know"*~~: in other words, divine guidance is the only objective criterion as to what is good and what is bad.

(17:13) "We have fastened the fate of every Insaan to his own neck, and on the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a book spread wide open"

This verse highlights the dependence on superstitious and magical thinking of human beings and how wrong it is. It clarifies in unequivocal terms that man's fate and

destiny is his own doing and a consequence of his own choices-good or bad.

The word used here for Fate is “Tair”, literally a bird, hence an omen, an evil omen and fate. The Arabs, like the ancient Romans, sought to read the mysteries of human fate from the flight of birds.

And many of us in our own day seek to read our future fortunes by similar superstitions.

We read in the previous verse that there are Signs of God, but they are not meant to subserve the vulgar purpose of disclosing our future destiny in a worldly sense.

They are meant for quite other purposes, as willed by their creator.

Our real fate does not depend upon birds or omens or stars. It depends on our deeds; good or evil, and they hang round our necks!

These deeds, good or evil, will be embodied in a scroll which will be quite open to us in the light of the Day of Judgment, however much we may affect to be ignorant of it now or waste our energies in prying into mysteries that do not concern us.

(17:67) “When you are touched with hardship at sea, you ‘totally’ forget all ‘the gods’ you ‘normally’ invoke, except Him. But when He delivers you ‘safely’ to shore, you turn away. Insaan is ever ungrateful”

Against God's gracious gifts and mercies is contrasted man's ingratitude. In danger he remembers God, the One True God, but relapses into his own fancies when the danger is past.

This behaviour of mankind is a proof of the fact that our real nature knows no other Lord than one true God, and we feel in the depths of our hearts that He alone possesses the real power of every gain or loss. Had it not been so, man would never have invoked the one true God at the time when he realized that no other helper could remove his misfortune.

(17:83-84) “Yet when We bestow Our favours on Insaan he turns away and becomes remote on his side (instead of coming to Us) and when Evil seizes him he gives himself up to despair! Say, (O Prophet): "Each one acts according to his own inclinations. Your Lord knows well who is best-guided to the Right Path”

Another important quality to beware of is this superficial and arrogant attitude coupled with a sense of blatant ingratitude towards the bounties and blessings of our creator.

True faith saves us from two extremes: when we are happy, we are saved from being puffed up, for we realise that everything comes from our loving and caring creator; and when we suffer misfortunes, we are not in despair, for we know that the very same merciful creator is our sure refuge and help.

The 84th verse further clarifies that all humans act according to their inclinations and dispositions. If the wicked go their own ways, there is nothing to discourage us. It is their nature. We must seek and hold fast to true guidance. We must not be disappointed by the inclinations of others towards falsehood and wickedness, our creator is fully aware of who is making what choices and will reward mankind accordingly!

(17:100) “Say ‘to them, O Prophet’, ‘Even if you were to possess the ‘infinite’ treasures of my Lord’s mercy, then you would certainly withhold ‘them’, fearing they would run out—for Insaan is ever stingy!’”

This verse is in the context of an argument addressed to those who would confine God's revelations to a limited circle of men, such as they themselves belonged to. The immediate reference was to the Jews, who could not understand how any Gentiles could receive revelations and guidance even superior to what they considered their own birth-right.

But the tendency is widespread in the human race. A particular race, or caste, or a particular kind of culture, claims to be the custodian of God's Message, whereas it is universal. God's Mercy is universal, and He scatters the priceless Treasures of His Mercy broadcast among His creatures. They are not exhausted by spending. It is only the misers who hoard their wealth for fear it should be used up by spending. 'Are you spiritual misers going to keep back God's holy Message from the rest of mankind? Is that the reason why you deny the advent of the new Teacher, who comes as a Mercy to all men-to all Creation?'

This stinginess of man creates poverty in the economic field, social injustice in the societal fabric and religious divisions and sectarian poisoning in the spiritual spheres of human existence! Man has been warned to be generous instead of taking to miserliness.

(18:54) “We have surely set forth in this Quran every kind of lesson for people, but Insaan is the most argumentative of all beings”

If men had not cultivated the habit of contention and stubbornness, they would have found that the parables and examples described in the Quran had fully met their difficulties, and they would gladly have obeyed the call of God. Quran has alluded to all aspects of human needs if only man would open his heart and mind to this message instead of engaging in hair splitting arguments

based on human opinions and individual or sectarian understandings!

This is to warn the people that the Quran has left no stone unturned in making the truth plain. It has employed all kinds of arguments, parables and similitudes and used all the possible effective ways to appeal to the heart and the mind of man, and adopted the best possible style. If, in spite of this, they do not accept the truth, it is obvious that they are waiting for God's scourge like the one that visited the former communities to make them realize their error.

**(19:66-67) “Yet ‘some’ Insaan ask ‘mockingly’,
“After I die, will I really be raised to life again? But
does not Insaan call to mind that We created him
before out of nothing?”**

This is another example of man's arrogance and ignorance. Man tends to reject every argument that his five senses cannot comprehend and yet ignores the numerous facts of his very existence on this planet whilst engaged in such denial!

He does not insist on seeing oxygen and yet cannot live a few moments without it! He is not bothered about the amazingly perfect water cycle that maintains drinking water and therefore life on earth and yet chooses to deny mockingly the master who created such perfection!

Man has realised how a couple of tiny cells coming into contact with each other inside the womb of a female suddenly begin to take shape and form of a miraculous structure that later becomes a disputing individual! Man chooses to ignore and deny how he was created out of nothing and this self-styled denial leads him to deny the resurrection for the sake of accountability!

(21:37) “Insaan is a creature of haste (impatience). Soon I will show you My signs, therefore, you need not be impatient”

Haste is in the very bone and marrow of man. If he is granted respite for his own sake, in order that he may have a further chance of repentance and coming back to God, he says impatiently and incredulously:

"Bring on the Punishment quickly, that I may see if what you say is true!" Alas, it is too true! When the Punishment actually comes near and he sees it, he will not want it hastened. He will want more time and further delay! Poor creature of haste!

(22:66) “And He is the One Who gave you life, then will cause you to die, and then will bring you back to life. ‘But’ surely Insaan is ever ungrateful”

Once again the ingratitude of man is highlighted in here. This verse especially talks about the life that was given to man and how ungrateful man is. God not only gave life with liberty to choose and refuse to man but also

made provisions for him to gain the true guidance through the messages sent down by his creator. In order to fulfil the requirements of accountability and ensure true justice God has decided to bring all mankind back to life on the day of judgement. All this was done for man and yet he shows total ingratitude towards all blessings and bounties of his creator!

(33:72) “The fact is that We offered the Trust ("freedom of choice" and to voluntarily use this option according to the will of God) to the heavens, to the earth and to the mountains, but they refused to undertake it and were afraid, but man undertook it. for, verily, he has always been prone to be unjust and ignorant (of consequences)”

The Trust is something given to a person, over which he has a power of disposition; he is expected to use it as directed or expected, but he has the power to use it otherwise. There is no trust if the trustee has no power, and the trust implies that the giver of the trust believes and expects that the trustee would use it according to the wish of the creator of the trust, and not otherwise.

The Heavens, the Earth, and the Mountains, ie., other creatures of God, besides man, refused to undertake a Trust or a responsibility, and may be imagined as happy without a choice of good or evil being given through their will. In saying that they refused, we imply a will,

but we limit it by the statement that they did not undertake to be given a choice between good and evil.

They preferred to submit their will entirely to God's Will, which is All-Wise and Perfect, and which would give them far more happiness than a faculty of choice, with their imperfect knowledge. Man was too audacious and ignorant to realise this, and the result has been that man as a race has been disrupted: the evil ones have betrayed the Trust and brought Punishment on themselves, though the good have been able to rise far above other Creation, to be the muqarrabin, the nearest ones to God: 56:11 and 56:88.

What can be higher than this for any creature? It follows incidentally from this that the Heavens and the Earth were created before man was created and this is in accordance with what we know of the physical world in science: man came on the scene at a comparatively late stage

The word Hamala used for bearing the burden means to undertake, bear, carry (the Trust or responsibility), to be equal to it. This is the ordinary meaning, and the majority of Commentators construe so. But some understand it to mean "to carry away, run away with, to embezzle (the thing entrusted); hence to be false to the Trust, to betray the Trust."

In that case the sense of verses 72-73 would be: "God offered the Trust to other creatures, but they refused, lest they should betray it, being afraid from that point of view: but man was less fair to himself: in his ignorance he accepted and betrayed the Trust, with the result that some of his race became Hypocrites and Unbelievers and were punished, though others were faithful to the Trust and received God's Mercy". The resulting conclusion is the same under both interpretations.

God intended a very high destiny for man, and placed him in his uncorrupted state even above the angels, but in his corruption he made himself even lower than the beasts. What was it that made man so high and noble? The differentiating quality which God gave man was that God breathed something of His own spirit into man (32: 9; 15:29). This meant that man was given a limited choice of good and evil, and that he was made capable of Forbearance, Love, and Mercy. And in himself man summed up God's great world: man is in himself a microcosm.

Zalum (translated "unjust") and Jahul (ignorant) are both in the Arabic intensive form; as much as to say, 'man utterly failed to measure his own powers or his own knowledge.' But God's Grace came to his assistance. Where man did his best, he won through by God's Grace, even though man's Best was but a poor Good.

In order to get an idea of the extraordinary importance of the matter, God may have depicted the scene as if the

earth and the heavens and the mountains like the Himalayas were present before Him on one side and a 5 to 6 foot man, on the other. Then God might have asked:

“I want to invest someone of My creation with the power that being a subject of My Kingdom, it may acknowledge My Supremacy and obey My commands of its own free will; otherwise it will also have the power to deny Me, even rebel against Me. After giving him this freedom I shall so conceal Myself from him as if I did not exist at all. And to exercise this freedom I shall invest him with vast powers, great capabilities, and shall give him dominion over countless of My creations so that he may raise any storm that he may in the part of the world he is placed.

Then I shall call him to account at an appointed time. The one who will have misused the freedom granted by Me, will be made to suffer the consequences of his disobedience by being worthy of punishment; and the one who will have adopted My obedience in spite of all chances and opportunities for disobedience, will be raised to such high ranks as no creation of Mine has ever been able to attain. Now tell, which of you is ready to undergo this test?”

Although, this verse is an allegorical example and should not be taken as literal in its meaning it helps identify the magnitude of this massive responsibility or trust, as it was!

There is also a subtle indication in this verse of how man actually possessed the ability to shoulder this responsibility and the unjust and ignorant aspects of his nature allow him to accept challenges and also to create situations which would bring out the best and the worst out of all humans. It is this very reason the test is so clearly apt for humans and not for any other creation regardless of the size and position of that creation. This is why God said to the angels that they do not know what this man is capable of despite its weakness to cause chaos and corruption in the perfectly ordered and balanced system of the universe.

Man's ability to perform wonderful acts of sacrifice and restraint despite having the inclination and the opportunity to be selfish and cause harm is what makes him unique and deserving of the high position that he is promised in the next life!

By imagining this scene through his heart's eye only can man judge exactly what delicate position he holds in the universe! God in this verse has called the person unjust and ignorant, who lives a carefree life in the place of his test, and has no understanding at all of how great a responsibility he is shouldering, and what consequences he will encounter of the right or wrong decisions that he makes in choosing and adopting an attitude for himself in the life of this world. He is ignorant because the fool thinks he is accountable to no one; he is unjust because he is himself preparing for his doom and is also preparing the doom of many others along with him.

(36:77-78) “Do Insaan not see that We have created them from a sperm-drop, then—behold!—they openly challenge ‘Us’? And he makes comparisons for us and forgets his own (Origin and) Creation: He says "Who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?"

Man's disobedience and folly are all the more surprising, seeing that apart from God's greatness and mercy man is himself such a puny creature, created out of something that is less than a drop in the vast ocean of Existence. Yet man has the audacity to stand out and dispute with his Maker, and institute idle comparisons for him!

That is, man thinks that God is like His creatures, who at best have very limited powers, or man draws idle parallels like that mentioned at the end of this verse. 'Who can give life to dry bones, and decomposed ones at that?' Man certainly cannot, and no power in nature can do that. But why compare the powers and capacities of God's creatures with the powers and capacities of the Creator?

The first creation-out of nothing-is far more difficult for us to imagine than a second or subsequent process for which there is already a basis. And God has power over all things. Man tends to forget this in his aggressive argumentativeness.

(39:8) “When Insaan is touched with hardship, they cry out to their Lord, turning to Him ‘alone’. But as soon as He showers them with blessings from Him, they ‘totally’ forget the One they had cried to earlier, and set up equals to God to mislead ‘others’ from His Way. Say, ‘O Prophet,’ “Enjoy your disbelief for a little while! You will certainly be one of the inmates of the Fire”

Trouble and adversity often bring a man to his bearings. But if he is not firm and constant, he forgets the lessons which life is meant to teach him. As soon as he gets a little prosperity, he forgets that it is from God, and attributes it to something which may only be a secondary cause, e.g., his own efforts or the Powers of Nature, or something which he has invented and made into a god, e.g., idols or fate.

God is the Ultimate Cause of all things. To set up rivals to him in this way is not only wrong and degrading to the false worshipper himself, but misleads countless ignorant people, who may not be able to make allowances for the figures of speech or the symbolism by which subtler minds can explain away falsehoods.

Those who practise and those who teach evil and blasphemy may seem to flourish in this world. But their satisfaction will be of very short duration. They are treading all the while the Path that leads to the Fire of Perdition.

(39:49) “When Insaan is touched with hardship, they cry out to Us ‘alone’. Then when We shower Our blessings upon them, they say, “I have been granted all this only because of ‘my’ knowledge.” Not at all! It is ‘no more than’ a test. But most of them do not know”

People ignorantly think that whoever is being blessed by God in some material way is being so blessed necessarily on account of his worth and ability and that the same is a sign or proof of his being a favourite in His sight. Whereas the fact is that whoever is being given something in this life, is being given it as a part of a trial by God.

This is a means of the test, and not any reward for ability, otherwise many able and worthy people would not be living in poverty and many unworthy people would not be rolling in prosperity. Likewise, these worldly blessings are not a sign of one’s being a favourite with God either. Everyone can see that many good people whose goodness is unquestionable are living in hardships in the world, and many wicked people whose evil-doing is well known are enjoying the pleasures of life.

Now, can a sensible man take the affliction of the one and the life of ease and comfort of the other as an argument to say that God hates the good man and prefers the bad man?

Prosperity may be a trial as much as adversity. The rest of the message is the same as above in verse 8.

(41:49-51) “Insaan never tires of asking for the good [things of life]; and if evil fortune touches him, he abandons all hope, giving himself up to despair. When We give him a taste of some mercy from Ourselves after some adversity has touched him he is sure to say "This is due to my (merit): I think not that the Hour (of Judgment) will (ever) be established; but if I am brought back to my Lord I have (much) good (stored) in His sight!" But We will show the Unbelievers the truth of all that they did and We shall give them the taste of a severe Penalty. When We bestow favours on man, he turns away and drifts off to another side; and when an evil befalls him, he comes with lengthy supplications./prolonged prayers.”

Not only is man prone to doubts and speculations in matters beyond his ken, thus disturbing the even tenor of his spiritual life: he is apt to run into opposite extremes in his daily experiences in this life. He is always hankering after the good things of this life. They are not all good for him. If he receives a little check, even though it may be to bring him to his bearings and turn his thoughts to higher things, he is apt to fall into despair.

When men entertain false ideas of values in life, there are two or three possible attitudes they may adopt in reaction to their experiences. In the first place, their desire may be inordinate for the good things of this life, and any little check brings them into a mood of despair.

In the second place, if their desire is granted, they are puffed up, and think that everything is due to their own cleverness or merit, and they forget God. Not only that, but they go a step further, and begin to doubt a Hereafter at all! If by chance they have a faint glimmering of the Hereafter, which they cannot help recognising, they think themselves "favoured of Heaven", because of some small favours given to them in this life by way of trial.

Thus they turn all things, good or evil, away from their real purpose, because they are devoted to falsehood. Here we come to men's ingratitude and hypocrisy. If they receive favour, they go farther away from God, instead of coming nearer to him. If they suffer ill, they call on God and offer prolonged prayers, but it is not sincere devotion and therefore worthless.

How mean and shallow is a person who starts imploring God humbly when touched by harm and is beside himself with joy when he receives the good things of life as most human beings are involved in this weakness, it has been called a weakness of man!

(42:48) “But if they turn away, We have not sent you ‘O Prophet’ as a keeper over them. Your duty is only to deliver ‘the message’. And indeed, when We let Insaan taste a mercy from Us, they become prideful ‘because’ of it. But when afflicted with evil because of what their hands have done, then they become totally ungrateful”

This verse brings to light another aspect of ingratitude shown by man-this is in relation to the arrangements made by our creator for revealing the guidance from God to man through the chosen humans –Prophets- and what response the man shows. This is in the form of a warning, that men may repent and do good, and pray for God's Mercy and Grace. If the warning is not heeded or is rejected, the prophet of God is not responsible for bringing about the Penalty or for forcing people to come to the right Path. He is not a guard set over them to free them from the need of exercising their limited free-will.

That is, the Prophet pbuh has not been made responsible that he must bring them to the right path anyhow, nor will he be held accountable as to why these people did not come to the right path.

Man here implies the mean and shallow people who are the subject of the discourse here, who have gotten a measure of the worldly provisions and are exulting in this, and who do not pay any attention when they are admonished to come to the right path. But when they are visited by a disaster in consequence of their own

misdeeds, they start cursing their fate, and forget all those blessings which God has blessed them with, and do not try to understand how far they themselves are to be blamed for the condition in which they are placed.

Thus, neither does prosperity become conducive to their reformation nor can adversity teach them a lesson and bring them to the right path. Here the weakness of man has been mentioned in a general way and pointed out that what is the real cause of his sad plight. This teaches us an important point of the wisdom of dawah- sharing the message of Islam: the weaknesses of the addressee should not be made the target directly, but they should be mentioned in a general way so that he is not provoked, and if his conscience has still some life in it, he may try to understand his shortcoming with a cool mind.

(43:15) “Still the pagans have made some of His creation out to be a part of Him. Indeed, humankind is clearly ungrateful”

As a contrast to the men of true understanding are the ungrateful blasphemous creatures, who offer a share to others besides God! They imagine sons and daughters to God, and forget the true lesson of the whole of Creation, which points to the Unity of God.

“Assign to some of His slaves a share with Him” implies declaring a servant/creation of God His offspring, for an

offspring inevitably is homogeneous with and a part of the father's body, and regarding somebody as God's son or daughter means that he or she is being made a partner in God's Being.

Besides, another form of making a creature a part of God is that it should be regarded as possessor of the attributes and powers as are specifically God's own, and it should be invoked under the same concept, or rites of worship performed before it, or its sanctities observed and regarded as obligatory and binding. For, in that case man divides divinity and provider between God and His servants and hands over a part of it to the servants and creation of God.

An example of this is mentioned by the Quran as Christians and Jews made their scholars and priests into Gods on account of accepting their authority to impose their opinions as binding on the believers-Christians and Jews. The Quran says:

“They have taken as lords beside God their rabbis and their monks and the Messiah son of Mary, when they were bidden to worship only One God. There is no God save Him. Be He Glorified from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him)!” (9:31)

Unfortunately today's Muslim ummah has a similar problem with sectarianism and following of scholars as if they are the final authority when it comes to giving fatwas and following them in letter and spirit!

(50:16) “Indeed, ‘it is’ We ‘Who’ created Insaan and ‘fully’ know what their innermost self whisper to them, and We are closer to them than ‘their’ jugular vein”

God created man, and gave him his limited free-will. God knows the inmost desires and motives of man even better than man does himself. He is nearer to a man than the man's own jugular vein. The jugular vein is the big trunk vein, one on each side of the neck, which brings the blood back from the head to the heart.

The two jugular veins correspond to the two carotid arteries which carry the blood from the heart to the head. As the blood-stream is the vehicle of life and consciousness, the phrase "nearer than the jugular vein" implies that God knows more truly the innermost state of our feeling and consciousness than does our own ego.

(53:39) “And Insaan can have nothing but what he strives for (by himself)”

From this verse also three important principles are derived:

- (1) That every person will get only the fruit of his own deeds.
- (2) That the fruit of one man’s deeds cannot be given to another unless he has a share in that deed.
- (3) That none can attain anything without striving for it.

In this connection it is to be noted that in the ethics of the Qur'an, the term "action" ('amal) comprises also a deliberate omission of actions, whether good or bad, as well as a deliberate voicing of beliefs, both righteous and sinful: in short, everything that man consciously aims at and expresses by word or deed.

It is emphasised here that a man must not be carefree and have a magical thinking that certain acts of rituals and blessings from some pious or supposedly spiritual people will somehow save him from the accountability of the day of judgement!

Instead he is being reminded in no ambiguous terms that he has to strive for his rewards and that he will only get the fruits of what he sowed himself and that man must strive, or he will gain nothing; and that if he strives, the result must soon appear in sight and he will find his reward in full measure.

(70:19) “Truly man was created very impatient”

Man, according to the Plan of God, was to be in the best of moulds (95:4). But in order to fulfil his high destiny he was given free-will to a limited extent. The wrong use of this free-will makes his nature weak (4:28), or hasty (17:11), or impatient, as here. That becomes his nature by his own act, but he is spoken of as so created because of the capacities given to him in his creation.

“Man has been created impatient”: It is man’s nature or his natural weakness to be impatient. Here, one should keep in view that at many places in the Quran, after making mention of mankind’s common moral weaknesses, those who believe and adopted righteousness have been made an exception to these weaknesses.

This by itself explains the truth that these hereditary weaknesses are not unalterable. If man accepts the guidance sent down by God and tries to reform himself practically, he can remove them. On the contrary if he gives a free hand to his base self, these become ingrained in him deeply.

(75:3-5) “Does Insaan think that We cannot [resurrect him and] bring his bones together again? Yes, We are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers. But Insaan desires to persist and continue in his evil ways”

Two qualities have been mentioned in these verses, the lack of understanding of how God can resurrect man and the desire to lust after his whims and wishes.

Those who deny the life hereafter say again and again: How can it be that the people who died hundreds of thousands of years ago, whose bodies have disintegrated into particles and mixed in the dust, whose bones decayed and were scattered away by the winds, some of

whom were burnt to ashes, others devoured by the beasts of prey, still others drowned in the seas and swallowed by fish, the material constituents of their bodies should re-assemble and every man should rise up as the same person that he once was ten or twenty thousand years before?

God has given its very rational and highly forceful reply in the form of this brief question: Does man think that We shall not be able to put his bones together? That is, if you had been told that the scattered particles of your body would reunite of their own accord sometime in the future, and you would come back to life by yourself with this very body, you would no doubt have been justified in regarding it as impossible.

But what you have actually been told is that such a thing will not happen by itself, but God the Almighty and All Powerful will do this. Now, do you really think that the Creator of the universe, the universe which cannot be functioning so perfectly without a perfect designer, would be powerless to do so?

God further clarifies this amazing power by saying, that is, not to speak of building up your skeleton once again by gathering together the major bones; We are able to make whole the most delicate parts of your body, even your fingertips, including the specific fingerprints that each one of you possess, as they used to be before.

“But man desires to persist in his evil ways” In this brief sentence the real disease of the deniers of the Hereafter

has been clearly diagnosed. What makes them deny the Hereafter is not, in fact, their regarding the Resurrection and Hereafter as impossible but they deny it because acceptance of the Hereafter inevitably imposes certain moral restrictions on them, which they detest.

They desire that they should continue roaming in the world at will as they have been roaming before. They should have full freedom to go on committing whatever injustice, dishonesty, sin and wickedness that they have been committing before, and there should be no deterrent to obstruct their freedom and to warn them that one day they will have to appear and render an account of their deeds before their God. Therefore, it is not their intellect which is hindering them from believing in the Hereafter but their desires of their base self.

It is bad enough not to repent of past sins. But the evil-doer who rejects a Day of Reckoning and has no conscience wants to go on in his career of sin and jeopardise his future also.

(75:10-14) "On that Day Insaan will cry out: "Is there any way to escape?" By no means! No place of safety! On that Day all will end up before your Lord. On that day Insaan is told the tale of what he has done and what he has left undone. In fact the Insaan shall against himself be an eye-witness"

These verses bring to light the plight of the man who lived a life in total disregard to the guidance from his creator and finds himself suddenly resurrected and accountable for all that he did or did not do! He will try in vain to seek any escape route or refuge but none except the Mercy of the creator will be available-and that will go against all tyrants and miscreants of the world!

“Bima qaddama wa akhkhara” is a very comprehensive sentence, which can have several meanings and probably all are implied:

(1) That man on that Day will be told what good or evil he had earned in his worldly life before death and sent forward for his hereafter, and also informed what effects of his good or evil acts he had left behind in the world, which continued to work and to influence the coming generations for ages after him.

(2) That he will be told everything he ought to have done but which he did not do, and did what he ought not to have done.

(3) That the full date wise account of what he did before and what he did afterwards will be placed before him.

(4) That he will be told whatever good or evil he had done as well as informed of the good or the evil that he had left undone.

The purpose of placing man’s record before him will not be to inform the culprit of his crimes, but this will be done because the demands of justice are not fulfilled

unless the proof of the crime is produced before the court; otherwise everyman fully knows what he actually is. For the sake of self-knowledge he does not need that another one should tell him what he is.

A liar can deceive the whole world but he himself knows that he lies. A thief can devise a thousand devices to conceal his crime but he himself is aware that he is a thief. A person involved in error can present a thousand arguments to assure the people that he is honestly convinced of the disbelief, atheism or polytheism, which he professes and follows, but his own conscience is never unaware of why he persists in that creed and what, in fact, prevents him from understanding and admitting its error and wrongfulness.

An unjust, wicked, dishonest, immoral and corrupt person can even suppress the voice of his own conscience by inventing one or another excuse so that it may stop reproaching him and should be satisfied that he is doing whatever he is doing only because of certain compulsions, expediencies and genuine needs, but despite this he has in any case the knowledge of what wrong he has committed against a certain person, how he has deprived another of his rights, how he deceived still another and that unlawful methods he used to gain what he has gained.

Therefore, at the time when one appears in the court of the Hereafter, every disbeliever, every hypocrite, every wicked person and culprit will himself be knowing what

he has done in the world and for what crime he stands before his God-thus he or she would be like a witness against its own self!

"On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to what they have been doing " (24:24)

It is not what a man says about himself, or what others say of him, that determines judgment about him. It is what he is in himself. His own personality betrays him or commends him.

All good and bad deeds, positive and negative, i.e., all sins of commission and omission, and all the good that a man did and all the evil that he omitted, all the influence that he radiated before him and all that he left behind him-all will be detailed to him like a story!

(75:36) "Does man think that he will be left to wander around without any purpose/accountability?"

The word used in this verse i.e. Sudan: has many implications: (1) uncontrolled, free to do what he likes; (2) without any moral responsibility; not accountable for his actions; (3) without a purpose, useless; (4) forsaken.

The word suda when used with regard to a camel implies a camel who is wandering aimlessly, grazing at will, without there being anybody to look after him. Thus, the verse means: Does man think that he has been left to

himself to wander at will as if his Creator had laid no responsibility on him, had imposed no duty on him, had forbidden nothing to him, that at no time in future he would be required to account for his deeds.

This same theme has been expressed in (Surah Al-Mominoon, verse 115) thus: On the Day of Resurrection, God will ask the disbelievers: Did you think that We had created you without any purpose, and that you would never be brought back to Us. At both these places the argument for the necessity of the life hereafter has been presented as a question.

The question means: Do you really think that you are no more than mere animals? Don't you see the manifest difference between yourself and the animal? The animal has been created without the power of choice and authority, but you have been blessed with the power of choice and authority; there is no question of morality about what the animal does, but your acts are necessarily characterized by good and evil.

Then, how did you take it into your head that you had been created irresponsible and unanswerable as the animal has been? Why the animal will not be resurrected, is quite understandable. The animal only fulfilled the fixed demands of its instinct, it did not use its intellect to propound a philosophy; it did not invent a religion; it did not take anyone its god nor became a god for others; it did nothing that could be called good or bad; it did not enforce a good or bad way of life, which

would influence others, generation after generation, so that it should deserve a reward or punishment for it.

Hence, if the animal perished to annihilation, it would be understandable, for it could not be held responsible for any of its acts to account for which it might need to be resurrected. But how could you be excused from life-after-death when right till the time of your death you continued to perform moral or immoral acts, which your own intellect judged as good or bad and worthy of reward or punishment?

Should a man who killed an innocent person go off free and should never be punished for the crime of murder he committed? Do you really feel satisfied that a man, who sowed corruption and created fuss in the world, which brought on evil consequences for mankind for centuries after him, should himself perish like an insect; or a grasshopper, and should never be resurrected to account for his misdeeds, which corrupted the lives of hundreds of thousands of human beings after him?

Do you think that the man, who struggled throughout his life for the cause of truth and justice, goodness and peace, and suffered hardships for their sake, was a creation of the kind of an insect, and had no right to be rewarded for his good acts?

Surely, the creator who brought into being this wonder of a creation in the form of Insaan, will not let him away with what he committed and omitted!

(76:1-2) “Has there not been over Insaan a long period of Time when he was nothing--(not even worth) mentioned?” For` indeed, We `alone` created Insaan from a drop of mixed fluids in order to test him: so We gave him (the gifts) of Hearing and Sight”

The undoubted fact is mentioned in the form of a question, to catch the attention of the audience of the Quran. It is certain that the physical world existed long before man was ever heard of or mentioned, as geological records prove. It is also true that the world existed long before man came on the scene (2:30-31) Man is here taken in a generic sense. Even after the appearance of mankind on this planet, each individual person is carried by and passed on generations after generations in the form of genetic material-which is hardly worth mentioning as a person- till the two fluids mingle together and a miracle is witnessed by mankind every time a baby is born!

Mixed or mingled fluid means the female ovum has to be fertilised with the male sperm before a new animal can be born. Man as an animal has this humble origin. But he has been given the gift of certain faculties of receiving instruction (typified by Hearing) and of intellectual and spiritual insight (typified by Sight).

His life has therefore a meaning: with a certain amount of free-will, he is to be the vicegerent on earth (2:30).

But he must be trained and tried, and that is the whole problem of human life.

The reason for creating a human has been mentioned in here as the test and trial that he has to undergo in his life. This shows man's real position in the world and the position of the world for man.

He is not like the trees and animals that the object of his creation be fulfilled on the earth itself, and he should die and perish here after he has played his appointed role over a period of time according to the law of nature.

Furthermore, this world is neither a place of punishment for him, as the monks think, nor a place of rewards as the believers of the law of transmigration think, nor a place of entertainment and enjoyment, as the materialists think, nor a battlefield, as the followers of atheists think, but in fact it is a place of test and trial for him. That which he regards as his age, is in fact the time given to him for the test.

Whatever powers and capabilities he has been given in the world, the things that have been placed under his control and authority, the various positions and capacities in which he functions, and the relationships that he enjoys with other people, all these are the countless manners of the test and this test continues till the last breath of his life.

The result is not to be announced in this world but in the Hereafter when all his answer books will have been

assessed, decision will be given whether he has come out successful or failed. And his success or failure wholly depends on what he thought of himself while he functioned here and how he answered the questions that were given to him here.

If he believed that he had no God, or that he was the slave of many gods, and while answering the questions he thought that he was not to be held accountable before his Creator in the Hereafter, his whole lifework went wrong.

And if he regarded himself as the slave of One God and worked in the way approved by God, with the accountability of the Hereafter always in view, he stood successful in the test. This theme has occurred at many places in the Quran.

The words *sami* (hearing) and *baseer* (seeing) in the original text actually imply being “sensible and intelligent”. These words of the Arabic language are never used in respect of the animal although it also hears and sees. Thus, hearing and seeing here do not imply the powers of hearing and seeing which have been given to the animals too, but those means through which man obtains knowledge and then draws conclusions from it.

Besides, since hearing and seeing are among the most important means of knowledge for man, only these two have been mentioned briefly; otherwise it actually implies giving man all those senses of the body by which he gathers information.

Then the senses given to man are quite different in their nature from those given to animals, for at the back of every sense he has a thinking brain, which collects information gained through the senses; arranges it, draws conclusions from it, forms opinions, and then takes some decisions which become the basis of his attitude and conduct in life.

Hence, after saying, "We created man in order to try him," to say, "therefore, We made him capable of hearing and seeing" actually contains the meaning that God gave him the faculties of knowledge and reason to enable him to take the test.

(79:34-35) "And so, when the great, overwhelming event [of judgement] comes to pass. The Day when Insaan shall remember (all) that he strove for"

The Judgment, the time for sorting out all things according to their true, intrinsic, and eternal values. The Judgment will be not only for his acts but for his motives, "all he strove for". In this life he may forget his ill-deeds, but in the new conditions he will not only remember them, but the Fire of Punishment will be plainly visible to him, and not only to him, but it will be "for all to see". This will add to the sinner's humiliation.

When man will see that the same Day of accountability of which he was being foretold in the world, has come, he will start remembering each one of his misdeeds done

in the world even before his records are handed over to him. Some people experience this even in the world. If at some time they come across a dangerous situation suddenly when death seems to be staring them in the face, their whole life flashes across their mind's eye all at once.

(80:17) “[But only too often] Insaan destroys himself: how stubbornly does he deny the truth!”

At all such places in the Quran, man does not imply every individual of the human race but the people whose evil traits of character are intended to be censured. At some places the word man is used because the evil traits are found in most of human beings, and at others for the reason that if the particular people are pin-pointed for censure, it engenders stubbornness. Therefore, admonition is given in general terms so as to be more effective. Please refer to the above verses for such clarifications of various negative traits of Insaan.

(80:24) “Then let Insaan look at his Food (and how We provide it)”

After a reference to man's inner history in the preceding verses of this surah, there is now a reference to just one item in his daily outer life, his food: and it is shown how the forces of heaven and earth unite by God's Command to serve man and his dependants. "A provision for you

and your cattle" (verse 32). If that is the case with just one item, food, how much more comprehensive is God's beneficence when the whole of man's needs are considered!

That is, let him consider the food, which he regards as an ordinary thing, how it is created. Had God not provided the means for it, it was not in the power of man himself to have created the food on the earth in any way. How abundant is the source of food that for hundreds of thousands of years all mankind and all of His creation is being fed, without any exhaustion in His provision! The endangered species are not the lamb and chicken even after being consumed in millions- what an amazing sign of His bountifulness!

(82:6) "O Insaan! What has deceived you about your generous Lord Who created you, shaped you, and made you well-proportioned, and moulded you in whatever form He pleased?"

God not only created man, but fashioned him in due proportions, giving him extraordinary capacities, and the means wherewith he can fulfil his high destiny. By "Form" (Surat) here I understand the general shape of things in which any given personality is placed, including his physical and social environments, his gifts of mind and spirit, and all that goes to make up his outer and inner life. The Grace of God is shown in all these things, for His Will is formed from perfect knowledge, wisdom, and goodness.

The man is encouraged to ask this question of what is it really that has deluded him from even considering the bounties of his creator! That is, in the first place, the bounty and favour of your Beneficent Sustainer required that you should have acknowledged his bounties and become an obedient servant and should have felt shy of disobeying Him, but you were deluded into thinking that you have become whatever you are by your own effort, and you never thought that you should acknowledge the favours of Him Who gave you your life.

Secondly, it is your Lord's bounty and kindness that you can freely do whatever you like in the world and it never so happens that whenever you happen to commit an error, He should punish you with paralysis, or blind your eyes, or cause lightning to strike you. But you took His bountifulness for weakness and were beguiled into thinking that the kingdom of your God was devoid of justice!

(84:6) "O Insaan! Indeed, you are labouring persistently towards your Lord, and will 'eventually' meet the consequences"

The word used is kadha which means to strive and struggle persistently and relentlessly!

That is, "You may if you so like think that all your efforts and endeavours in the world are confined to worldly life and motivated by worldly desires, yet the

truth is that you are moving, consciously or unconsciously, towards your Lord and you have ultimately to appear before Him in any case.

The subsequent verses after this it is said that he who will be handed the list of his deeds in the right hand, will return happily to his companions, but who will be given his list of deeds from behind his back, will wish he was dead (that is, it will be so bad).

This verse can be interpreted in two ways.

(kadaha linafsihi) means “he performed good or bad deeds for himself”. This verse would in fact mean that whether a man does good deeds or bad, their results are bound to be manifested. To meet the Sustainer means “to face the consequences as per the law of requital”.

- But if this verse is translated to mean “O’ man, you will have to bear hardships in order to go towards your Sustainer”, then this would mean that man will ultimately have to reach his destination that has been fixed by his Sustainer.

But for this he will have to struggle hard. If he obeys the Revelation then he will face strong opposition and may even be persecuted by the opponents, but this is the easier path in terms of the long term results.

However, if he does not follow the path of the Revelation, then he will struggle towards the destination through a process of trial and error over a period of centuries. His self-interests will pull him towards the

corruption on earth while the demands of the life hereafter would ask him to look and move forward.

Human history is a living proof of this phenomenon. Mankind is gradually moving to this destination but since man has adopted the path of intellect without the light of the revelation it has to meet different failures on the way.

It is clear and evident how much mutual fights and blood shedding is resulting in the absence of the guidance of the revelation and this only leads to few steps forward. If he had adopted the way shown by the revelation then his life's journey would have been much easier and the life on this spaceship called Earth would have been pleasant and bountiful for every inhabitant on it!

This life is ever full of toil and misery, if looked at as empty of the Eternal Hope which Revelation gives us. Hence the literature of pessimism in poetry and philosophy which thinking minds have poured forth in all ages, when that Hope was obscured to them.

"Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." "To each his suffering; all are men condemned alike a groan!"

It is the noblest men that have to "scorn delights and live laborious days" in this life.

The good suffer on account of their very goodness: the evil on account of their Evil.

But the balance will be set right in the end. Those that wept shall be made to rejoice, and those that went about thoughtlessly rejoicing, shall be made to weep for their folly.

They will all go to their account with God and meet Him before His Throne of Judgment.

(86:5) “So let Insaan consider of what he was created. He was created of a gushing fluid, issuing from between the loins [of man] and the pelvic arch [of woman]”

After inviting man to ponder over the heavens in the preceding verses of this Surah of the Quran, he is now being invited to consider his own self and see how he has been created, who is it who selects one sperm from among billions of sperms emitted by the father and combines it at some time with one ovum out of a large number of the ova produced by the mother, and thus causes a particular human being to be conceived?

Then, who is it who after conception develops it gradually in the mother’s womb until it is delivered in the form of a living child? Then, who is it who in the mother’s womb itself brings about a certain proportion

and harmony between its bodily structure and its physical and mental capabilities?

Then, who is it who watches over it continuously from birth till death, protects it from disease, accidents and calamities and provides him with countless means of life and opportunities for survival in the world of which he is not even conscious, not to speak of having the power to provide these for himself.

Is all this happening without the planning and supervision of One God?

A man's seed is the quintessence of his body. It proceeds from his loins, i.e., from his back between the hip-bones and his ribs. His back-bone is the source and symbol of his strength and personality. In the spinal cord and in the brain is the directive energy of the central nervous system, and this directs all action, organic and psychic.

The spinal cord is continuous with the Medulla Oblongata in the brain.

Furthermore, Testes and ovaries are formed in the abdomen of the fetus during the first weeks of pregnancy, before descending to their permanent place in the pelvis. Both are sustained by arteries originating between the backbone and the ribcage.

The plural noun tara'ib, rendered by as "pelvic arch", has also the meaning of "ribs" or "arch of bones"; according to most of the authorities who have specialized in the

etymology of rare Qur'anic expressions, this term relates specifically to female anatomy (Taj al-'Arus).

(89:15) “Now, whenever Insaan is tested by His Lord through ‘His’ generosity and blessings, he boasts, “My Lord has ‘deservedly’ honoured me!” But when He tests man by limiting his provision, he protests, “My Lord has ‘undeservedly’ humiliated me!”

This is a description of man’s materialistic view of life. He regards the wealth and position and power of this world alone as everything. When he has it, he is filled with pride and says God has honoured me; and when he fails to obtain it, he says: God has humiliated me.

Thus, the criterion of honour and humiliation in his sight is the possession of wealth and position and power, or the absence of it, whereas the truth which he does not understand is that whatever God has given anybody in the world has been given for the sake of a trial. If he has given him wealth and power, it has been given for a trial to see whether he becomes grateful for it, or commits ingratitude.

If he has made him poor, in this too there is a trial for him to see whether he remains content and patient in the will of God and faces his hardships bravely within permissible bounds, or becomes ready to transgress every limit of morality and honesty and starts cursing his God.

We can clearly see the contrast of God's justice and watchful care with man's selfishness and pettiness. God tries us both by prosperity and adversity: in the one we should show humility and kindness; and in the other patience and faith. On the contrary, we get puffed up in prosperity and depressed in adversity, putting false values on this world's goods.

Man tends to regard the absence or loss of affluence not as a trial, but as an evidence of divine "injustice" - which, in its turn, may lead to a denial of God's existence.

Subsistence, in both the literal and the figurative sense is provided by God for all, but people complain if the provision is measured and restricted to their needs, circumstances, and antecedents, and does not come up to their desires or expectations, or is different from that given to people in quite different circumstances.

(89:23) “And on that Day hell will be brought [within sight]; on that Day Insaan will remember [all that he did and failed to do]: but what is the use of remembering then? He will cry, “I wish I had sent forth ‘something good’ for my ‘true’ life.”

The Retribution will at last come, and we shall realise it in our inmost being, all the illusions of this fleeting world having been swept away. Then we shall remember, and wish, too late, that we had repented. Why

not repent now? Why not bring forth the fruits of repentance now, as a preparation for the Hereafter?

The words in the original can have two meanings:

(1) That on that Day man will remember whatever he had done in the world and will regret, but what will remembrance and regretting avail him then.

(2) That on that Day man will take heed and accept admonition: he will realize that whatever he had been told by the Prophets was true and he committed a folly when he did not listen to them; but what will taking heed and accepting the admonition and realizing one's errors avail then.

Our life in this world is the time to seek the truth and take heed. Once our eyes shut, there is no escape from our misdeeds and carefree life styles! Next life is based on the consequences of our doings in this life- the sooner a man realises this the better for his own self in both the worlds.

(90:4-7) "Verily, We have created Insaan into [a life of] pain, toil and trial. Does he, then, think that no one has power over him? He boasts, "I have spent and wasted wealth abundant!" Does he, then, think that no one sees him?"

The term kabad, comprising the concepts of "pain", "distress", "hardship", "toil", "trial" etc., can be rendered

only by a compound expression like the one above.
"Man is born unto troubles as the sparks fly upward"
(Job, v. 7); "For all his days are sorrows, and his travail
grief" (Ecclesiastes, ii. 23).

Man's life is full of sorrow and vexation; but this verse has a different shade of meaning: man is born to strive and struggle; and if he suffers from hardships, he must exercise patience, for God will make his way smooth for him (lxv. 7; xciv. 5-6). On the other hand no man should boast of worldly goods or worldly prosperity as described in the verses 5-7 here.

Man's being created in toil means that man in this world has not been created to enjoy himself and live a life of ease and comfort, but the world for him is a place of enduring and undergoing toil, labour and hardship, and no man can be immune from this.

Can man afford to be, after being ever exposed to such hazards, involved in the delusion that he can do what he likes, and there is no superior power to seize and suppress him?

The fact, however, is that even before the occurrence of the Hereafter in this world itself, he sees that his destiny every moment is being ruled by some other Being against Whose decrees all his plans and designs prove ineffective.

A tiny virus can cripple the whole world of this deluded man! A single jolt of the earthquake, a blast of wind, a

flood in the river and a sea-storm are enough to show how weak and feeble man is against the divine forces.

A sudden accident can reduce a strong and robust person to a cripple; one turn of the fortune deposes a mighty sovereign from the position of authority. When the fortunes of the nations, which have climbed to the very apex of glory and prosperity, change, they are humiliated and disgraced even in the world where no one could dare look at them in the face. How has then this man been deluded into thinking that no one else can have power over him?

By boasting about squandering wealth man is implying that his resources - and, therefore, his possibilities - are inexhaustible. We must remember that the term "man" is used here in the sense of "human race": hence, the above boast is a metonym for the widespread belief - characteristic of all periods of religious decadence - that there are no limits to the power to which man may aspire, and that, therefore, his worldly "interests" are the only criteria of right and wrong.

The man who feels no responsibility and thinks that he can do what he likes in life forgets his responsibility to God. He boasts of his wealth and scatters it about, thinking that he can thus purchase the support of the world. For a time he may. But a rude awakening must come soon, for he bases his hopes on unsubstantial things. Or if he spends his substance on self-indulgence,

he is weakening himself and putting himself into snares that would ultimately destroy him.

The verse continues, does he think that he is responsible to none but himself? Doesn't this boaster understand that there is also a God above him, who sees by what means he obtained this wealth, in what ways he spent it, and with what intention, motive, and purpose he did all this? Does he think that God will put any value on his extravagance, his fame-mongering and his boasting? Does he think that like the world, God too will be deluded by it?

God watches him, and sees all his acts and motives, and all the secret springs of his follies. But lest he should think the higher forces too remote for him, let him look within himself and use the faculties which God has given him.

(95:4) “Indeed, We created Insaan in the best form. Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low, except those who believe and do good—they will have a never-ending reward”

Taqwim means mould, symmetry, form, nature and constitution. There is no fault in God's creation. To man God gave the purest and best nature, and man's duty is to preserve the pattern on which God has made him (30:30). By making him vicegerent, God exalted him in

posse even higher than the angels, for the angels accepted his superiority (2:30-34).

But man's position as vicegerent also gives him will and discretion, and if he uses them wrongly he falls even lower than the beasts.

God has endowed man with all the positive qualities, physical as well as mental, corresponding to the functions which this particular creature is meant to perform. The concept of "the best mould or form" is related to the Quranic statement that everything which God creates, including the human being or self (nafs), is "formed in accordance with what it is meant to be" (91:7), as well as - in a more general sense – (87:2). This statement does not in any way imply that all human beings have the same "best form" in respect of their bodily or mental endowments: it implies simply that irrespective of his natural advantages or disadvantages, each human being is endowed with the ability to make the, for him, best possible use of his inborn qualities and of the environment to which he is exposed.

Man's having been created in the most excellent of moulds means that he has been given the finest body which no other living being has been given, and he has been blessed with the noblest faculties of thought, knowledge and intellect which no other creature has been blessed with.

If man rebels against God, and follows after evil, he will be abased to the lowest possible position. This

"reduction to the lowest of low" is a consequence of man's betrayal - in another word, corruption - of his original, positive disposition: that is to say, a consequence of man's own doings and omissions.

After having been created in the finest of moulds when man uses the powers of his body and mind in evil ways, Allah grants him the power to do only evil and causes him to reach the lowest ebb of degradation. This is a truth which one commonly observes in human society. People become so overwhelmed by greed, selfishness, lustfulness, addiction to intoxicants, meanness, rage and fury and such other traits that morally they are actually reduced to the lowest of the low.

When a nation is blinded by its hostility to another country it surpasses all savage beasts in barbarity. A wild beast preys upon its victim only for the sake of food, it does not resort to a general massacre; but man resorts to massacre of his own kind.

The beast only uses its claws and teeth but man who has been created in the best of moulds invents the gun, rifle, tank, aircraft, atom and hydrogen bombs and countless other weapons by his intellect so that he can instantly destroy whole populations.

The beast only kills or inflicts a wound but man invents such painful methods of torturing men like himself as cannot even be imagined by a beast. Then to wreak his vengeance and fury on his enemies he forces the women to march out in naked processions: they are subjected to

rape by tens and twenties of men; they are dishonoured before the eyes of their fathers, brothers and husbands; children are massacred in front of their parents; mothers are forced to drink their children's blood; human beings are burnt and buried alive.

There is no wild species of animals in the world which may equal this human barbarity in any degree. The same is also the case with other evil traits, man proves himself to be the lowest of the low in whichever evil he indulges. So much so that he degrades even religion which is the most sacred thing for man: he worships the trees, animals and mountains, even the sex organs of man and woman; he keeps religious prostitutes in the places of worship to win the goodwill of the gods and commits adultery with them as an act of virtue. In his mythology he attributes such filthy tales to his gods and goddesses which would make the most wretched beast to hang his head in shame.

However, just as it is a common observation in human society that the morally degraded are made the lowest of the low, so this is also an observation of every age that those who believed in God, the Hereafter and the Prophethood and who kept themselves to the original form and mould that God had created them with.

They not only lived their lives after righteousness and piety but also remained secure from this degeneration and remained consistent with the best mould and nature that God had created them on. Such are the men of

courage and dignity who had the will and strength to oppose all such degrading and abasing ways and methods of the “lowest of the low category” of human.

Such men of steel stood against the forces of evil and fought by the strengths of their backs and the sweat of their brows to try and make the truth, justice, virtue and peace for everyone a reality in human societies of their times. It is because of these very great deeds that such men of honour are worthy of the unending reward, i.e. the reward which will neither be less than what they deserve, nor will it ever be cut off.

(96:5-8) “(God) taught Insaan what he did not know! Nay, but verily man is rebellious for he thinks himself to be self-sufficient. Surely to your Lord is your return”

God teaches us new knowledge at every given moment. Individuals learn more and more day by day; nations and humanity at large learn fresh knowledge at every stage. Man's unique ability to transmit, by means of written records, his thoughts, experiences and insights from individual to individual, from generation to generation, and from one cultural environment to another endows all human knowledge with a cumulative character; and since, thanks to this God-given ability, every human being partakes, in one way or another, in mankind's continuous accumulation of knowledge, man is spoken of as being "taught by God" things which the single

individual does not - and, indeed, cannot - know by himself.

This stress on man's utter dependence on God, who creates him as a biological entity and implants in him the will and the ability to acquire knowledge, receives its final accent, as it were, in the next three verses. Furthermore, God's "teaching" man signifies also the act of His revealing, through the prophets, spiritual truths and moral standards which cannot be unequivocally established through human experience and reasoning alone: and, thus, it circumscribes the phenomenon of divine revelation as such.

That is, man originally was absolutely illiterate. Whatever of knowledge he obtained, he obtained it as a gift from God. Whatever doors of knowledge at any stage did God willed to open for man, they went on opening up before him. This same thing has been expressed in the verse:

“And the people cannot comprehend anything of His knowledge save what He Himself may please to reveal” (2:255).

Whatever man looks upon as his own scientific discovery was, in fact, unknown to him before. God gave him its knowledge whenever He willed without his realizing that God by His grace had blessed him with the knowledge of it.

All our knowledge and capacities come as gifts from our creator. But man, in his inordinate vanity and insolence, mistakes God's gifts for his own achievements. The gifts may be strength or beauty, wealth, position, or power, or the more subtle gifts of knowledge or talents in individuals,-or Science, or Art, or Government, or Organisation for mankind in general.

Man becomes rebellious in his thinking of his achievements as his own and therefore feels and sees himself as independent and in no need of God's guidance!

Man is not self-sufficient, either as an individual, or in his collective capacity. If he attributes God's gifts to himself, he is reminded-backwards, of his lowly physical origin (from a drop of animal matter), and forwards, of his responsibility and final return to his creator-God Almighty! Whatever man might have attained in the world, which makes him behave arrogantly and rebelliously, in the end he has to return to his Lord. Then he will realize what fate awaits him in consequence of his such attitude and behaviour.

(99:1-4) “When the earth will be shaken with a mighty shaking, and the earth will throw up all her burdens, and Insaan will cry out: “What is the matter with her? On that Day it will relate all her news”

To the ordinary human observer a violent earthquake is a terrifying phenomenon, in its suddenness, in its origin, and in its power to destroy and uproot the strongest

buildings and to bring up strange materials from the bowels of the earth. The Overwhelming Event which ushers in the Judgment will be a bigger and more far-reaching convulsion than any earthquakes that we know. And yet the incidents of earthquakes may give us some idea of that supreme world-shaking Event.

An earthquake, if accompanied by a volcanic eruption, throws up enormous boulders and lava from beneath the crust of the earth. They are thrown up as if they were a burden to the Earth personified. They may be all kinds of minerals, or treasures buried for secrecy. So in the great and final Convulsion, the dead who had been buried and forgotten will rise; and will be brought to the light of day, and justice will be done in the full glare of absolute Truth.

Man would be puzzled by the great events of that day and the present order may be personified as the earth. It will pass away, but the Deeds done therein, even the most secret, will be brought to the full light of day. And this will be because God will give the Command, the inspiration or Word, by which alone all events do proceed.

Man in this verse may as well imply every man, for after resurrection and coming to senses the first impression of every man will be as to what was happening around him; afterwards he will realize that it was the Resurrection Day. Man may also imply the man who denies the Hereafter, for what he regarded as impossible would be

happening in front of him and causing him confusion and bewilderment.

As for the believers, they will not be bewildered and confused, for everything would be taking place according to their belief and conviction. To an extent, this second meaning is supported by verse 52 of Surah Yaseen, in which it has been said that the deniers of the Hereafter at that time will exclaim:

Ah, who has roused us from our sleeping place? And the reply given would be: This is the same which the Merciful God had promised and the Messengers sent by God had spoken the truth. This verse does not expressly say that this answer to the disbelievers would actually be given by the believers, for there is no indication of it in the verse. The probability, however, is that the believers will give them this answer.

(100:6-8) “Surely Insaan is most ungrateful to his Lord; And to that (fact) he bears witness (by his deeds); and surely he loves wealth with a passionate loving”

Whenever man surrenders to his appetites he forgets God and his own responsibility to Him. In contrast to those who receive guidance and engage in an unceasing war against Evil, is the self-deluded ungrateful man to his Lord and Cherisher, Him Who created him and sustains him, and sends His blessings and favours at all times.

The ingratitude may be shown by thoughts, words, and deeds,-by forgetting or denying God and His goodness, by misusing His gifts, or by injustice to His creation. Man, himself, by his conduct, proves the charge of treason against himself.

What an evil choice he makes in committing treason against his own Benefactor by going after the petty baubles of this world's wealth of fleeting gains?

The powers which man is employing for fighting, shedding blood and plundering had not been given to him by God for this purpose.

Therefore this indeed is sheer ingratitude that the resources granted by God and the power given by Him should be used for causing chaos and corruption to spread in the earth, which God abhors.

(103:1-3) “By the ‘passage of’ time! Surely Insaan is in ‘grave’ loss, except those who have faith, do good, and urge each other to the truth, and urge each other to perseverance”

The term Asr denotes "time" that is measurable, consisting of a succession of periods (in distinction from Dahr, which signifies "unlimited time", without beginning or end: i.e., "time absolute"). Hence, 'Asr bears the connotation of the passing or the flight of time - time which can never be recaptured.

An appeal is made to Time as one of the creations of Allah, of which everyone knows something but of which no one can fully explain the exact significance. Time searches out and destroys everything material.

No one in secular literature has expressed the tyranny of "never-resting Time" better than Shakespeare in his Sonnets. For example, see Sonnets 5 ("never-resting Time"), 12 ("Nothing against Time's scythe can make defence"), and 64 ("When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced The rich proud cost of outworn buried age").

If we merely run a race against Time, we shall lose. It is the spiritual part of us that conquers Time.

If life be considered under the metaphor of a business bargain, man, by merely attending to his material gains, will lose. When he makes up his day's account in the afternoon, it will show a loss. It will only show profit if he has Faith, leads a good life, and contributes to social welfare by directing and encouraging other people on the Path of Truth and Constancy.

Faith is his armour, which wards off the wounds of the material world; and his righteous life is his positive contribution to spiritual ascent.

If he lived only for himself, he would not fulfil his whole duty. Whatever good he has, especially in moral and spiritual life, he must spread among his brethren, so that they may see the Truth and stand by it in patient hope

and unshaken constancy amidst all the storm and stress of outer life. For he and they will then have attained Peace within!

The Quran has made this word “Khusr” a special term of its own and uses it as an antonym of “Falah” (true success). And just as its concept of Falah is not merely synonymous with worldly prosperity but comprehends man’s true success from the world till the Hereafter, so its concept of khusr (loss) is also not merely synonymous with worldly failure or distress but comprehends man’s real failure and disappointment from the world till the Hereafter.

The surah describes the four qualities on the existence of which depends man’s being secure from loss and failure.

These are: Having true faith, doing of good deeds, reminding each other of the truths and showing as well as encouraging patience and perseverance.

Thus, to exhort one another to truth means that the society of the believers should not be so insensitive that falsehood may thrive and things against justice and truth be done in it, and the people be watching everything indifferently.

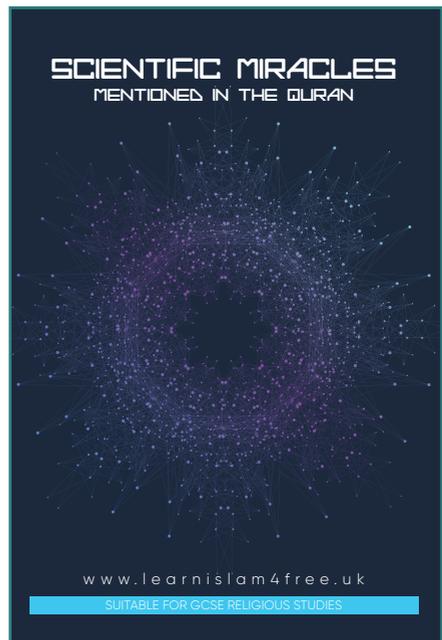
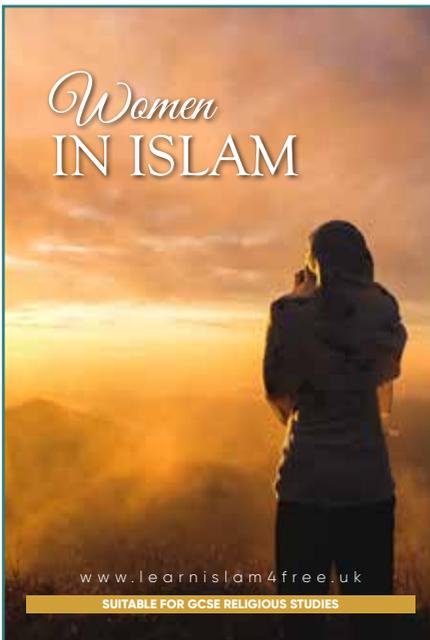
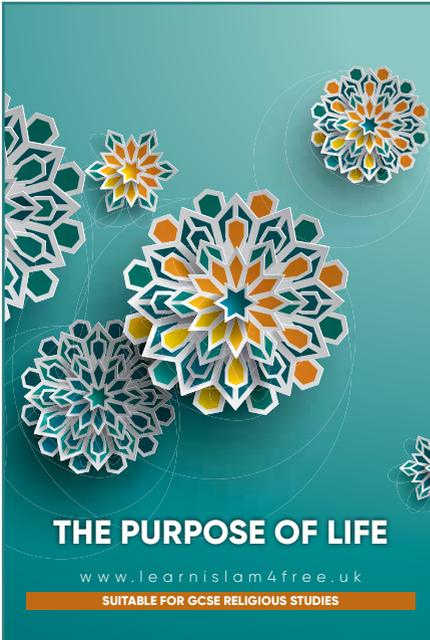
On the contrary, it should be a living, sensitive society so that whenever and wherever falsehood appears, the upholders of the Truth should rise up against it, and no member of the society rest content with only himself adhering to truth, righteousness, justice and rendering

the rights of others, but should exhort others also to adopt the same way of life.

This is the spirit that can ensure security of a society against moral degeneration and decay. If a society becomes devoid of this spirit, it cannot remain secure from loss. Besides exhorting to the truth, the other thing which has been declared as a necessary condition for keeping the believers and their society secure from loss is that the members of the society should enjoin patience upon one another.

That is, they should enjoin upon one another to bear with fortitude and steadfastness the difficulties, hardships, trials, losses and deprivations which befall the one who adheres to the truth and supports it. Each one of them should encourage the other to bear up against adversity steadfastly.

OTHER ESSENTIAL READINGS



Booklets

1. The Quran
2. The Book That Shook The World
3. World's First Written Constitution
4. The Sharia Law
5. The Purpose Of Life
6. The People Of The Book
7. What Is Islam?
8. The Concept Of God In Islam
9. Jesus In Quran
10. Did Jesus Predict Coming Of Muhammad?
11. Common Misconceptions About Islam
12. Is There A Creator?
13. Women In Islam
14. The Hijab
15. Scientific Miracles Mentioned In The Quran
16. Message To Mankind
17. Islam's Solution To Terrorism
18. Islam For The 21st Century
19. Muhammed pbuh The True Role Model
20. Muhammed pbuh As A Teacher
21. Morals And Manners Of Muhammed pbuh
22. Marriage-Relevance And Importance
23. For Those Who Reflect
24. Salah-Islamic Prayer
25. Fasting In Islam
26. Hajj-The Islamic Pilgrimage
27. Islam Has No Clergy
28. Islam Against Sectarianism
29. Concept Of Halal & Haram In Islam
30. What Is Bank Interest And Riba?
31. Is There Life After Death?
32. What Is Zakah?
33. Role Of Masjid And Imam
34. What Is Shahdah?
35. The Wakeup Call
36. Islam Against Racism
37. Remembrance Of God
38. The Book Of Prayers
39. Etiquettes In Islam
40. The Rights Of Parents And Children
41. Beautiful Stories Of Prophet Muhammed pbuh For Children - Book 1
42. Moral Stories For Children - Book 2
43. The Book Of Manners For Children - Book 3
44. Islam For Children
45. The New Muslim Book
46. Insaan (Human) described in the Quran
47. Islaam Against Racism
48. Quran on Atheism
49. Quranic Description of the Satan

